

**GLOBALIZATION, SUSTAINABILITY AND JUSTICE:
JUST TRANSITIONS: HISTORY AND VARIETIES
POLS462, FALL 2025
(Final, October 9)**

Classroom: Behavioral Sciences 105

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Office Hours: Tuesday and Thursday 11-12

Tuesday 3-4 and by appointment

Content of Course:

- 1) Although the concept of Just Transition has been around since the early 1990s very few people outside of labor unions and environmental justice organizations were familiar with it until 2015 when it was mentioned, symbolically, in the Paris Agreement on climate policy. During the last several years, however, its use and its meanings have proliferated. During the first part we will trace the history of JT through original documents and secondary writings (academic and popular). During the second and third parts we will examine a variety of just transition policies, in relation to categories of transitions, using similar sources. During the fourth part we will focus on the describing and evaluating just transitions. All along the way we will work on identifying research projects on which we will build throughout the course and, more intensely, during the last part of the course.
- 2) For historical reasons just transitions have been associated with climate politics and the transition from fossil fuels and towards renewables. This is reflected in the material we will be reading as well as the research projects. However, the strategy was not intended solely for climate transitions but, rather, for any transitions. Both during its earlier years and more recently there has been significant discussion about just transition across all transitions, whether in health, education, biodiversity, food, manufacturing and more. Moreover, there has been significant interest in just transitions for a broad range of categories of people in terms of gender, race, ethnicity, immigrant status and so on. While the weight of this class is going to be on energy transitions (you will notice that this covers a lot of empirical ground and analytical review) I am open to non-energy projects if there is significant political and policy work already taking place.
- 3) It is important to state that the major goal of this course is to reflect critically on Just Transition, like we would with any contested concept, rather than glorify it or dismiss it out of hand.

Learning Outcomes:

- 1) Familiarize you with the history and diffusion of just transitions. *Means of assessment: examination, research, class participation, and written assignments.*

- 2) Expand the universe of just transitions beyond energy. *Means of assessment: examination, research, class participation, and written assignments.*
- 3) Familiarize you with evaluating Just Transitions policies. *Means of assessment: examination, research, class participation, and written assignments*
- 4) Focus on these important JT issues. *Means of assessment: Research project, reflection essay, peer evaluation.*

Contact Hours and Outside Work. The class will meet from 1:00-2:15 starting Tuesday August 26 and ending Thursday, December 11. On an average week you should plan on 2 hours of outside work (e.g., reading, studying, writing) for each credit (this is a 3-credit class, so six hours). When working on examinations (essays and research) you should budget 4 hours of outside work per credit.

Class Operation:

Information: The course will be based on visuals, readings, lectures, discussions, and research. **Lectures are a very important part of the course**, and they will provide context, interpret, complement, and add to the readings; they will not merely summarize them. You should take good notes, review material to which I provide links in lectures, and ask me to elaborate, as necessary. The visuals and readings on the syllabus should be completed in advance of the date on which they are assigned. Equally importantly, your own research will be a central part of the course information.

Collaboration Groups: The class will be divided into groups of 4-5 people. These groups will serve a variety of purposes including: discussions of class material and associated summaries and presentations; essays; mutual support and **research**. As necessary these groups will be reorganized during the second part of the course when research projects are clearer. I will provide detailed guidelines on the research projects.

Class Etiquette and Disruptive Behavior. Only those electronic devices that can be used to also take notes can be visible in class. I am requesting that smartphones and similar electronic devices not be visible or used in class.

Academic Integrity: This course adheres to the Academic Integrity Policy of the Colorado State University General Catalog and the Student Conduct Code. Colorado State University has long upheld values of academic and scholastic integrity. The General Catalog's "Policies and Guiding Principles" asserts that CSU "expects students to maintain standards of personal integrity that are in harmony with the educational goals of the institution" - citing "principles of academic honesty" as the first example. (1.6 Page 1).

Class Assignments:

Discussions of Class Materials: In-class discussions are a central element of this course and I hope that we will have them during every session. They will take place in two steps: group discussions followed by whole class discussions.

Written Assignments: There will be four **(4) very short take-home examinations**; one **(1) very short research project**; and a **combined presentation (your evaluation for this is part of the research project)**. The examinations will consist of one very short essay and a

very short research component. **I will provide the guidelines for each, well in advance.**

During the last part of the course each group will complete a **research project and** a short research essay. Each project will focus on one case, e.g., Colorado's just transition, or issue, e.g., transition from plastics, or sector, e.g., transition in healthcare. While one of the goals is to produce a collective presentation (and make it look cohesive), each one of you will be responsible for the research and the work on a specific part of the project. I will provide you with detailed guidelines and guidance but here the general parameters.

The total number of points in this class is 500 (100%), i.e., 100 for each examination and 100 for the research project. Some work on research will be integrated into each examination.

I will take off 5 points for each day an assignment is late.

I use the +/- system, e.g., 89-91=A-; 92-96=A, 97-100=A+.

Participation, Contribution, and Incentive:

Attendance will be taken regularly. **Nine (9) absences on more** will result in a failing grade. Excused absences do count towards that total (unless there is a chronic problem or requirement). But excused absences do not affect the incentive below.

Exceptional attendance and contribution: two (2) absences or less of two class sessions; constructive participation in group and class discussions; and timeliness in submission of assignments will result in adding **45 points** to your cumulative points; **Outstanding attendance and contribution:** Three (3) absences or less of two class sessions; constructive participation in group and class discussions; and timeliness in submission of assignments will result in adding **30 points** to your cumulative points. **Superior attendance and contribution.** (4) absences or less of two class sessions; constructive participation in group and class discussions; and timeliness in submission of assignments will result in adding **15 points** to your cumulative points. **Please note that attendance is a necessary but not sufficient criterion.**

SCHEDULE

August 26	Introductions
	Our backgrounds and interests
	Organization of the Class
	Themes of the Class
	To get us going

Have a look at the Colorado Office of Just Transition at <https://cdle.colorado.gov/the-office-of-just-transition>

PART I: HISTORY OF JUST TRANSITION

In this part we will learn about the origins of just transition and its continuing diffusion around the world. It is important to note the labor union origins of just transition so that its diffusion and proliferation become clearer.

August 28 The Origins of Just Transition

Tony Mazzocchi (1993) An Answer to the Jobs-environment Conflict? At <https://www.greenleft.org.au/content/answer-jobs-environment-conflict>

Les Leopold (1995) Address to the Great Lakes International Joint Commission. [Canvas Readings]

Stevis, Dimitris (2023) *Just Transitions: Promise and Contestation*. Cambridge University Press, Elements, parts 1&2. [Canvas, Readings Module]

September 2 The Origins of Just Transition

Samantha Harvey, Samantha (2018) Leave No Worker Behind. *Earth Island Journal*. At http://www.earthisland.org/journal/index.php/magazine/entry/leave_no_worker_behind/

Labor Network for Sustainability (2021) *Love, it Hate it: You've Heard the Term now Hear the Story*. Go to <https://www.labor4sustainability.org/just-transition-listening-project/> and click forward until you get to the one with the title.

September 4 The Globalization of Just Transition

Stevis, Dimitris (2023) *Just Transitions: Promise and Contestation*. Cambridge University Press, Elements, part 3. [Canvas, Readings Module]

Hizliok, Setenay, and Antonina Scheer (2024) What is the just transition and what does it mean for climate action? At <https://www.lse.ac.uk/granthaminstitute/explainers/what-is-the-just-transition-and-what-does-it-mean-for-climate-action/>

September 9 The Globalization of Just Transition [work on your own]

World Resources Institute (2022) *Just Transition and Equitable Climate Action Resource Center*. At <https://www.wri.org/just-transitions>

Use the map in the opening page and create a table that organizes cases reported by: continent, and JT sector (provided). Do you see any patterns, as far as this already dated database goes? This will be part of the first examination.

September 11 The Globalization of Just Transition: Global South

Pucheta, Mauro and Ana Belen Sanchez (2022) *Just Transition in the Global South: Perspectives from Latin America*. At <https://etui.org/sites/default/files/2022->

[06/Just%20transition%20in%20the%20Global%20South-Perspectives%20from%20Latin%20America_2022.pdf](#)

Review of First Examination

September 15 (M) **First examination due (by noon on Canvas and paper copy in class on the 16th)**

PART II **JUST TRANSITIONS FROM, TO, IN**

In this part we will explore the various kinds of transitions by focusing on transitions from sunseting industries, transitions within industries that are not sunseting or emergent and transitions to emergent industries. We will pay close attention to value chains (lifecycles)

September 16 **Energy Transitions From?**

Ritchie, Hannah and Pablo Rosado (2024) Fossil Fuels. Our World in Data. At <https://ourworldindata.org/fossil-fuels>

September 18 **Energy Transitions To?**

Ritchie, Hannah, Max Roser and Pablo Rosado (2024) Renewable Energy. Our World in Numbers. At <https://ourworldindata.org/renewable-energy>.

September 23 **Just Transitions From: Coal [virtual]**

What are the prospects of a transition from coal, just or not, as they emerge from our readings and research?

Clarke, Leon et al. (2024) Research Agenda for Economic Resilience in Fossil Fuel-dependent Communities. *Environmental Research: Energy* 1. (Canvas Readings and Reserve).

White House (2025) *Executive Order: Unleashing American Energy*. At <https://www.whitehouse.gov/presidential-actions/2025/01/unleashing-american-energy/>

Find three post 2023 references (articles, books, chapters) on just transitions from coal using Google Scholar, Web of Science or JSTOR.

September 25 **Just Transitions From: Oil and Gas [virtual]**

What are the prospects of a transition from oil and gas, just or not, as they emerge from our readings and research?

Colorado Fiscal Institute and Alliance for Collective Action (2024) Colorado's Energy Future: The 2024 Oil and Gas Worker and Community Transition Report. Policy Brief at https://www.afca.earth/wp-content/uploads/2024/12/Brief_-The-2024-Oil-Gas-Worker-and-Community-Transition-Report.pdf

Winters, Joseph (August 15, 2025) 'Consensus kills ambition': UN plastics treaty talks end without an agreement. *Grist*. <https://grist.org/international/plastics-treaty-inc-5-2-geneva-consensus-kills-ambition/>

Find three post 2023 references (articles, books, chapters) on just transitions from oil and gas using Google Scholar, Web of Science, or JSTOR.

September 30 Beyond-Energy Transitions [Virtual]

Does the argument that JT can be applied to sectors beyond energy seem persuasive?

Hughes, Kate and Miguel Rescalvo (2021) Just Transition Beyond the Energy Sector. *ADB Briefs*. <https://www.adb.org/sites/default/files/publication/746406/adb-brief-195-just-transition-beyond-energy-sector.pdf>

Find one just transition reference (article, book, chapter) for each of three sectors examined in this report using Google Scholar, Web of Science or JSTOR. Choose sectors you may be interested in researching further.

October 2 Beyond-Energy Transitions [Virtual]

Does the argument that JT can be applied to sectors beyond energy seem persuasive?

Just Transition and Care Network. 2024. *Care Work in the Just Transition: Providing for People and Planet*. Policy Brief. Geneva: United Nations Research Institute for Social Development. At <https://www.unrisd.org/en/library/publications/care-work-in-the-just-transition-providing-for-people-and-planet>

Find one just transition reference (article, book, chapter) for each of three sectors examined in this report using Google Scholar, Web of Science or JSTOR. Choose sectors you may be interested in researching further.

October 7 Synthesis

October 9 (Th) Second examination due (by noon on Canvas and paper copy in class on the 9th)

October 9 Just Transitions To

The transition to renewable energy is an example of a new industry emerging. Does it raise any questions of justice?

Mulvaney, Dustin (2023) Renewable Energy and Just Transition. In Jeannie Sowers, Stacy VanDeveer and Erika Weinthal (eds) *The Oxford Handbook of Comparative Environmental Politics*, pp. 679-695 (Canvas Readings Module)

October 14 Just Transitions In

Anderson, Jeremy (2021) Part 1: Defend and transform – mobilizing workers in all sectors for climate justice. At <https://globallabourcolumn.org/2021/09/02/part-1-defend-and-transform-mobilising-workers-in-all-sectors-for-climate-justice/>

Anderson, Jeremy (2021) Part 2: Just transition beyond the industry shutdown scenario. At <https://globallabourcolumn.org/2021/09/05/part-2-just-transition-beyond-the-industry-shutdown-scenario/>

October 16 Just Transitions: From, To, In

Schwanen, Tim (2021) Achieving Just Transitions to Low Carbon Urban-Mobility. *Nature Energy* 6: 685-687. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1038/s41560-021-00856-z>

Climate and Community Project (2025) Jobs for More Mobility and Less Mining. <https://climateandcommunity.org/research/jobs-for-more-mobility-and-less-mining/>

October 21 Just Transitions: From, To, In

Vachon, Todd. 2024. Climate Justice for All: Pursuing a Just Transition in the Education Sector. American Federation of Teachers. At <https://www.aft.org/ac/winter2023-2024/vachon>

Pamukcu, Aysha and Angela P. Harris. 2022. Health Justice and Just Transition. *The Journal of Law, Medicine and Ethics*, 50: 674-681. (Canvas Readings Module)

October 23 Just Transitions: From, To, In

Climate Justice Alliance. Just Transition Principles. At https://climatejusticealliance.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/11/CJA_JustTransition_highres.pdf

Indigenous Environmental Network. Indigenous Principles of Just Transition. <https://www.iencanada.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/08/PrinciplesJustTransition-Color.pdf>

October 28 Just Transitions: From, To, In

Climate Investment Funds (2022). *Just Transition*. Read landing page and guidance note. At <https://www.climateinvestmentfunds.org/topics/just-transition>

C40 (2022) Why a Just Transition is essential for advancing ambitious city climate action? At https://www.c40knowledgehub.org/s/article/Why-a-just-transition-is-essential-for-advancing-ambitious-city-climate-action?language=en_US

October 30 Work on third Examination

October 31(F) Third examination due 8pm on Canvas (no need to provide printed copy)

PART III ANALYZING JUST TRANSITIONS

November 4 Scale and Scope

This week we will explore the spatial and temporal scales of just transitions. Spatially just transition initiatives may be local, national or transnational and temporally they may reach further into the past or the future.

Stevis, Dimitris (2023) *Just Transitions: Promise and Contestation*. Cambridge University Press, Elements, part 4. [Canvas, Readings Module]

Zografos, Christos and Paul Robbins (2020) Green Sacrifice Zones or Why a Green New Deal Cannot Ignore the Cost Shifts of Just Transitions. *One Earth* 3(5): 543-546. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.oneear.2020.10.012>

November 6 Social and Ecological (In)equality

Just transition aims to address both social and ecological factors. How can we think about their intersection?

Hopwood, Bill, Mary Mellor and Geoff O'Brien (2005) Sustainable Development: Mapping Different Approaches. *Sustainable Development* 13(1): 38-52. [Canvas Readings]

Stevis, Dimitris (2023) *Just Transitions: Promise and Contestation*. Cambridge University Press, Elements, part 5. [Canvas, Readings Module]

November 11 Ambition

All policies reflect broader visions of the world. Some affirm the world as is while others seek to transform it in ways that we may or may not agree with.

Stevis, Dimitris (2023) *Just Transitions: Promise and Contestation*. Cambridge University Press, Elements, **part 6 and Conclusion**. [Canvas, Readings Module]

November 13 Elements of Just Transition Policies

Cha, Mijin et al. (2019) *A Roadmap to an Equitable Low-Carbon Future: Four Pillars for a Just Transition*. Climate Equity Network. At https://dornsife.usc.edu/assets/sites/242/docs/JUST_TRANSITION_Report_FINAL_12-19.pdf

November 18 Work on refining research project [group meetings with instructor]

Readings related to projects TBD

November 20 Work on refining research project [group meetings with instructor]

Readings related to projects TBD

November 21	Fourth Examination due by 5pm on Canvas (I will print copies)
November 25&27	Thanksgiving Break
December 2&4	Work on individual and collective parts of research project [group meetings with instructor]
December 9&11	Presentations of research
December 16	Research presentation and individual research due on Canvas by 6pm. No need to print paper copies.